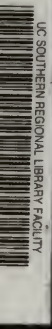


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OEMS

By TERENCE PHILIP



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C. K. OGDEN



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Poems

Written at Ruhleben

Poems

Written at Ruhleben

By

Terence Philip



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*All the poems in this volume were written during four years
of imprisonment in Germany.*

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The Princess of Cathay

SWISH of silk and bray of gong,
Bear the palanquin along !

Crystal flash and burning gold,
Azure curtains fold on fold.

Crimson sash and sable bow,
See the bristling archers go !

Solemn princes of the land,
Snow-white sole on yellow sand,
Sleeves of blue where dragons crawl
Round and round a fiery ball.

Suddenly an evening breeze,
Bowing the anemones
At the roadside where I stand,
Parts the curtain and I see—
Just a little quiet hand
Resting on a silken knee.

Song

IF music were the child of Light
Then I could all my longing prove,—
Bind me a captive in your sight
And tell you how I love.

Alas ! My songs are born in woe
And absence gives my tongue release,
In darkest night I singing go
And sigh my heart's increase.

But when you turn to me again
Then do I stand in radiant day,
A flaming joy within my brain
And not a word to say.

Summer Rain

LITTLE lark, like golden rain
Ran your music in my brain !
But the silver rain is falling,
Only cuckoo now is calling—
Sing again, O sing again !

Song

I LEANED upon a summer wall
And, oh, my heart was sick with woe,
But now the rain and snow may fall—
I laugh because I know, I know.

There's wonder of a morning grey
And patience of an autumn eve,
Whatever men may do and say
I cannot grieve, I cannot grieve.

There's fruit of stars in winter trees
Whose snowy blossom I have trod,
And he who loves forever sees
The miracle of Aaron's rod.

I leaned upon a summer wall
And, oh, my heart was sick with woe,
But now the rain and snow may fall,
I laugh because I know, I know.

A Memory

THE house stood grey against the sky,
The blinds were down, and far on high
A silver cloud went sailing by—
And my heart beat exultingly.
It beat so loud I had a fear
That everyone would wake and hear.

An Old Prisoner Dying

O TAKE me, Death, who 'mid the clash of war
Alone art strong in liberty and rest !
As mother Earth with spring and summer o'er
Gathers a withered flower to her breast.

This is thine hour soft Night with dew arrayed—
With tears and starshine is that hour fulfilled ;
So little from thine arms a child has strayed,
Grant in thy lap his crying may be stilled.

The Young Prisoner

I do not ask for peace nor end of strife
But life, more life !
All that like fire encompasseth
Love and his brother Pain :
To draw within me deep and deeper breath
For glory unto sun and rain,
Beauty and Death.

In a Garden

FAINT across the flowers see the daylight lean
Rose-flushed and languorous with all her eyes have
seen !

Meadow-bright the evening at her garment's hem
Stoops to lift her kerchief and drops a diamond gem.

The Coming of Spring

MARCH came shouting through the night
Calling winter out to fight,
And he made such mighty rout
All the world seemed turned about—
Till the sun rushed up between
Finding all things fresh and green :
Little buds on ancient trees,
Daffodils in last-year leaves,
Rain-washed roof and muddy lane
Welcoming the Spring again.

How the catkins rode the storm
And the snowdrop's tender form
Lived unwounded through the fright
Of that loud and dreadful night,
While the chimney-pots fell down
From the houses of the town—
No one knows and no one cares,
And if Winter's silver hairs
Still in places strew the ground,
These are all that can be found.

In the City

THOUGH half the beauty of the world die down
To ashen strength and bleak efficiency,
And men grown weary in the fevered town
Cry in their anguish to the leaden sky
How naught avails, nor strife nor merriment,
To wrest from darkness any hope of light ;
Where dreary toil yields drearier content,
A striving out of night to deeper night ;

I hear a voice of trees within the gates
Sighing through iron vault and prison stones
From far below, where Earth in patience waits
To claim man's folly with his naked bones ;
And always, when I walk the streets in spring,
I hear the grass beneath the pavement sing.

Summer

I SAW a thunder-cloud of black disgrace
To bear the glory of a rainbow spent,
A smile bloom perfect in a tear-stained face,
And laughter gather strength from dreariment.
Ripe grows the fruit with each succeeding light
And sweeter yet though bitter winds may blow ;
Strong grows the heart and gentler in despite
Of all the buffets life can e'er bestow.

I see the sun lean down along the sky
His burning arms to raise a tiny flower ;
His golden fingers loose a butterfly
And touch the vine to quick unreason'd power :
So may the burning wings of Love uphold
My heart, and make it free and overbold.

The Last Word

So there is nothing, nothing I can do,
I am a debtor, and must so abide ;
Since all the service I would render you,
To you is nothing,—better all denied.
I strove to give whose hand may never reach,
To tell in words what never can be told,
Fumbling the greasy purse of human speech
For that which never yet was bought or sold.

You filled mine eyes with light beyond the day,
Your beauty gave me faith to pass all fear ;
Yet there are times when I behold this gain,
Counting the joy I never shall repay,—
Then do I know how perilously near
Such riches are to poverty and pain.


To Clouds

How vast and tenuous is your delight
Of snow-bright plumage,—you the perfect songs
Of rounded bliss to heal our earth-worn sight,
Breasting the twilight like a brood of swans !
What secret splendour have you seen afar
To lend your journey such insistent grace ?
Whence are you and beneath what alien star,
O radiant pilgrims, is your resting-place ?

Have you beheld the farthest summer sea
O'erspume a coral reef, where blue atween
Flash golden fins and all beyond is green
Of flailing palm-crest tossed tumultuously ?
I wonder till my spirit strains elate
To share the urgent beauty of your fate.

The Starlight Night

No heavy-limbed submission to the night,
Nor day's calamitous increase shall blind
Mine eyes' endeavour to a deeper light,
Or leave the stars' bright fellowship behind ;
My sight is bound where night and day are one,
Far out beyond the echoes of the sun,
To feel the pulse of fire-dripping wings
Whose burning embassy can never fail :

When far below the world in slumber swings
Whose little meads with frost are silver-pale.
I shall hear voices of no earthly tone
On fountain'd music, like a rainbow gleam
Sprung at the crystal corners of the throne,
 There will I stand and bow me low in dream.

The Pilot

Too oft, my spirit ; you o'erreach the mark
Where music fails nor any word can bless,
To gaze alone upon the piteous dark
When love draws back in utter tenderness :
You bear the pain that only beauty brings,
The straining hunger nothing can suffice,
When song in agony of broken wings
Leans stark above a blinding precipice.

O lonely spirit, whither do you tend,
What strength upholds you that you do not turn
When the heart veers upon itself and fails ?
Perchance afar beyond our mortal end,
Some vast fruition do your eyes discern
Where peace undreamt of furls the weary sails.

Sonnet

As dawn's best crimson is most deeply fraught
With savage tempest and untimely night,—
So to the tumult of an afterthought
All young impression yields its swift delight.
Youth's sweetest song can compass no accord
Save by the sequence of an undertone,
Whose bitter gride no solvent can afford
Till age brings melody whence truth is gone.

But Death can harmonise what Love has sought
Binding the segments to a perfect whole,
And linking age to age shall suffer naught
To 'scape his fashioning and high control,
Till pain and beauty are so merged and bound
To perfect harmony, that Heaven is found.

Storm

THE wind has roused the silence of the plain
With sudden thunder and the rush of rain,
Bearing dark tempest o'er the sleeping world
And straining forward like a vanguard hurled
Upon the battlements of man's content.
I hail thee, Tempest, savage as thou art,
With pent destruction for our dreary ways,
Bear onward o'er the gloom of darker days
Till once again the Temple's veil is rent !
Sweep on, dark Tempest, crowd about my heart
Cloud upon cloud of death-encumbered night !
I look no more for any tender light
Of dayspring, but the lightning's fiery chain
To scourge the slumber from my weary brain.

Before Daybreak

I TURNED and saw the faint reclining moon
A weary phantom in the arms of night.
And one by one the stars grow pale and swoon
Upon the wind which runs before the light
To blow the dream-dust from the world and pass
From leaf to leaf, a rushing tide of sound ;
Then o'er the dew-grey slumber of the grass
A blackbird ran and peer'd upon the ground. . . .
And straightway from the deeps of memory
A breathless flower of delight was born :
O magic blossom of inconstant birth
Whose trancèd beauty scarce outlived the morn,
Spring at the heart of all my grievous dearth
And ope star-windows on Eternity !

The News

*Where shall we turn to-day
For a sign to behold,
Who shall rejoice in May
When Life to Death is sold ?*

Summer in every field
How pitiless thou art !
Is all thy joy revealed
To mock the human heart ?
While Death upon the air,
Death in the quiet street,
Here in this garden fair
Where hearts have gently beat,
Has quickened every breath,
Made every breath a prayer ;
Fire, Destruction, Death
And Summer everywhere.

O God who gave us light,
And love and beauty here,
To quicken all delight
From the green leaf to the sere,
Speak in my heart a word
Of understanding now,

While yonder sings a bird
Upon the hawthorn bough
And grass beneath my feet
Is starred with daisy-flower :
Here where life once was sweet,
Grant me the word of power !

(And this was yesterday,
So little time ago—
A single summer day
And yet how far away.)

I waited all in vain ;
White clouds were drifting by
And children in the lane
Were calling merrily :
They were at one with May
With all the bloom around,
And how my heart's dismay
Yearned to that joyful sound,
Which nothing could destroy ;
And straightway came to me
To flood my heart with joy
Of all that yet might be,—
The thought of one ' out there,'
Whereat my heart grew strong
And all my love turned prayer. . . .

I felt a stillness fall
As shadows grew apace
Along the garden wall
And evening filled the place. . . .

Then footsteps hastened near,
My heart leapt once and stood
Frozen with sudden fear,
I turned,—and understood. . . .

Some words were spoken low,
I know not how 'twas said,—
The words went through me so ;
And when I bowed my head,
A leaf upon the grass
Was all my mind could see.
I thought ere spring could pass,
This leaf upon the tree
Rejoicing yesterday
Against the rain and sun,
How there torn down it lay
With summer just begun.
The bitter wind of death
Had swept from shore to shore
And now its icy breath
Had struck me to the core.

That night of trackless pain
A thousand voices tore
And cried within my brain
Till I could bear no more ;
When something in my breast
Broke,—and the word was there,
God's very seal and crest,
His answer to my prayer. . . .

Then sorrow gave me sight,
The veil of darkness torn,
Straight from the heart of night
Sprang the great flower of dawn ;
And sudden sang the grass,
Whispered the hawthorn tree :—

*‘ Let youth and beauty pass
To crown Eternity,
For what are death and strife
When life is given to Life ? ’*

The Messenger

I SEE him ever when the daylight dies
With face uplifted to the burning West,
Along his arm a crimson lily lies
And to the ground his flaming sword is pressed :
A mighty diadem his brow adorns
With cloven lightning of a thousand spears,
His gaze is rapt and fierce as one who scorns
To speak, who looks beyond all mortal fears,
Hearing the wing-beat of the Seraphim
Across a thunder which is mortal death.
And when the land cries loudest for release
From strife he speaks to those who summoned
him :—
“ I am the Messenger of Wrath,” he saith ;
“ I am the chosen Overlord of Peace.”

November in England

How I love the mornings of old grim November,
Low lies the mist and slowly climbs the sun,
Silent are the meadows, a great peace enfolds them,
Night has long departed but day has scarce begun.

Ghostly droop the willows by the weedy mill-pond,
Motionless and dew-drenched stands an ancient
thorn ;

Nature that was spendthrift all the long green
Summer

Waits the arms of Winter, ragged and forlorn.

Yet I find her beauty stranger, more reluctant,—
Not the proud enchantment of a month ago ;
Now her eyes are deeper, full of shy surrender
Here by the roadside where moss and holly grow.

Vanished though her jewels, all her flowered satins,
With her feet unsandalled and her hair untied—
See ! the sun, her lover, has caught her naked
shoulder

And kissed her lips to scarlet of the berries at my
side.

June Night

O SUMMER night of stillness and repose—

Thou silver respite from the brazen day,
How tenderly the flaunting of the rose

In thy humility is hushed away !

And when the nightingale's first magic note

Has shot thy dreaming with a silver thread,
The lady moon leans from her slender boat
To smile upon the sun's proud lustihead.

Brave was the lark against the burning blue

And brave the marigold's unbashful eye,
But ah, the nightingale amidst the dew,

Beneath the jewel-flowers of the sky !
Though summer after summer may depart,
He keeps the eternal secret of their heart.

Eros

THOUGH we miscall thee so, framing thy worth
To fit the narrow semblance of our pain,
Or spread thee skyward to upfill the dearth
And straitened speculation of our brain,—
We know thee all-embracing, day and night
Enarching heaven with thy bended bow,
And when our puny minds refuse thy might
The levin splendour of their overthrow.

But once I saw thee bathed in silver dew
Run through the hush that lies before the dawn
And starry brooding of a summer night—
A child again, as when the world was new ;
I saw thee hold a daisy to a fawn,
Trembling with fear and laughing with delight.

The Grey Nightfall

Now does the evening gloom upon the land
And grey to grey flows in the tide of night,
The trees are dreaming darkly where they stand
And overhead one bird in steady flight
Bears on its wings no soft departing shine,
No radiance of a glory far upcaught,
But cheerless threads the waste of day's decline
As to its bourne some sad familiar thought.

So is my spirit folded to repose,
Not raised triumphant to a far serene
Or timeless citadel of proud romance,
But dumbly patient as a river grows
Far from the mountain echoes and the green,
Amid the marshland's melancholy trance.

Letter to a Friend

HAVE you patience yet for all my silence,
Friend, who showed me such a splendid welcome ?
Not to you shall I give mean excuses,
All the silence that I heap upon you
Lies a growing burden at my heart too.
Oft that heart says, " Write and speak a little."
Then I write,—and straightway tear the paper,
All I speak but proves a better silence.
While the thoughts which flash and seethe upon me
Like the waves of some unchartered ocean
Dark and foam-starred in the summer noonday
Drive the shingle far above the tide-line :
So my words are sped beyond my reason.

Could I check and hold them in their passing,
Stoop to sift and gather up the shingle,
Well I know their meaning would have vanished.
Pebbles bright as jewels in the water,
Grey and rusty when the sea has left them,
Such is Fancy in the hand of Reason.

So I write no letter, send no greeting
Yet remember that I too remember,
When I strive to bind the fleeting foam bloom,
Weave a crown or wind a garland of it,
Though I strive in vain, and give you silence.

See my words, they will not walk sedately,
When they're really mine they run and stumble.
Run and stumble into broken singing.
So forgive me if I set my mind free
Thus for once, with you to understand me ;
Free from all the trammels of a letter,
All opinions, news, and pleasant phrases
Which so irk the mind and blur the vision,
Drive the heart and spirit to a corner.
Let the words run swifter than the reason,
Leave for once that tyrant in the background ;
That's the only freedom and contentment.

Hardly had the springtime flamed to summer
There beyond, while here in due succession,
Mud and darkness turned to dust and sunshine,
Came a book to breathe immortal springtime,—
Such a book as fires the heart to read it,
Full of mighty thunder and the rainbow,
Sudden bird-song and the scent of meadows.
And I learn to know him first in prison,—
Blake who suffered here a lifelong bondage,
Bondage of the dull world's cold misprision,
Bondage of the fools and apes who mocked him,
Called him atheist and knave and madman ;
Till he left them grunting in their offal.

But he gave his spirit freedom,
Such a freedom bright and fearless.
Like a child and like a god :
Oh that spirit how it triumphs,

How it spreads its wings and soars
O'er the cataract of evening,
O'er the fountain of the dawn !

Often in these years of gloom and exile
Have I longed to view that magic country.
Glimpses had I, here and there, but seldom ;
Now I hold the key, the door stands open
[Fain would I have thanked the gracious giver,
Rarely was a gift more truly welcome.]

What of you now, from your mountain freedom
Does the light shine clearer on the distance ?
See you further than the day's endeavour ?
Where I sit and write to you this evening
Here lies beauty out of all proportion ;
Raise the eyes and catch a glimpse of sunset,
That is fine but here is something finer ;
Look ! beside me just beyond the dust-bin,
See a corner there of evening sunlight
Where some empty tins are piled in glory,—
Such a glory not Aladdin even
Ever dreamed of in a night's enchantment !
There's the miracle, the ancient wonder :
Empty tins grown fairer than the sunset,
Fairer far than all the jewels of Jamshyd ;
Just for once, and for one moment only,
But their beauty's mine, and mine for ever.

From a Prison Camp

WHERE winter's hand lies heavy on the year
And winds blow chill across an open field
I think of days long past, of faces dear,
Of how I loved and how my life is seal'd,
And then my heart upon the thought of thee,
Flames like a jewel on the robe of God,
Then springs a glory on the naked tree,
A crying sweetness from the barren sod ;
For all my sight is with thy beauty crowned,
And all my darkness blossoms like a flower.
The meanest weed scarce risen from the ground
Has more of perfect beauty and of power,
More solace for our toiling and our tears
Than all the garner'd wisdom of the years.

In a Year

I SAW a boy come down the lane,
He passed me with a frown ;
He was tired of the country
And was going to the town.

.

I met a young man in the town
With haggard eyes of dread,
Who worked all day and half the night
To earn a little bread.

.

I heard the bugles in the dawn
Blow fierce across the sea ;
I heard the steady tramp of feet
Marching to victory.

.

I passed an old man in the rain
And asked him of his child.
“ My boy,” he said, “ my boy is dead,
Across the sea,”—and smiled.

Pleasure and Pain

O DELICATE and swift with golden feather,
Of all things fair most easy to forget,
Spirit too fleet for any word to tether !
Shadow of joy and soul of all regret !

Blindly we follow through the sunlit garden
And thread the mazy palace of thy name,
Fearing no danger, with no heart to harden,
We burst upon thy shrine and learn our shame.

For where we sought thee we have found another,
Snatching a rose have grasped a richer thorn ;
We seized thee fiercely and beheld thy brother
Whose ashen beauty froze our very scorn.

And as we gazed we felt the palace crumble,
A rushing darkness and the fall of towers ;
We turned to fly, but we could only stumble
Into a garden dark, bereft of flowers.

Chimneys

EVERY morning when I wake
From my window I can spy
Chimneys like a crooked rake
All along the open sky.

Some are fat and proud and thick,
Square their shoulders scornfully,
Some, I think, are poor and sick
Looking sadly at the sky.

Two I like the best of all,
Though they look so young and thin ;
When the snows of winter fall
On their little hats of tin,
They don't seem to care at all.

They can turn their heads about
Looking right and looking left,
And I think they'd sing and shout
But they have no voices left.

They are friends and well I know
They agree in everything,
Silently in every woe
One another comforting.

In a world of smoke and grime
On the wettest, darkest days,
I have never any time
Caught them looking different ways.

Often I have watched them there
Gazing at the setting sun,
Like a nice contented pair
When their daily work is done.

Others in their stolid way
Are content to gape and stare
Straight above them all the day,—
Only see a horrid glare.

Mine can watch the stars come out
With the sunset in their eyes,
Then perhaps they turn about
Just to see the moon arise.

Hate

THERE'S beauty and strength and the word of a
king,
But who shall tell of a piteous thing
Which hides in the water and sings in the storm
And wanders deep as a delving worm ?

Strength and beauty and light are one,
As the world swings round to the summer sun,
But frost and anger will bar the gate
Wherever the worm has found its mate.

Never a word and never a song
Can rid the world of this ancient wrong,
Ere love and pity and age and peace
Have plucked the moth from the golden fleece.

Summer, 1915

OH, the long days at summer's burning crest
How sweet they were, how fraught with rich delight
Of the world's ample living ; how the west
Blushed with serene content of rosy light,
As little birds went joyfully to rest
On tired wings, and round the feet of night
Star upon star crept out across the blue
Like truant children shyly peeping through.

Once more the spring with laughter in her train
Has left the earth a sweet and solemn bride ;
The glist'ning morn strides boldly o'er the plain,
And naught the burning face of noon can hide ;
But now the bleeding thought of human pain
Spurs the poor heart all loveliness to chide
And weaves the very brightness of the air
To brazen shapes of horror and despair.

Hark how the cuckoo's pensive mockery
Links all our summers to the bitter now,
Sounding the tender deeps of memory ;
Once the heart swayed with every leafy bough
In spreading glory to the summer sky,
And with the lark's shrill passion kissed the brow
Of morning ; once, ah ! once ere dark dismay
Struck light and beauty from the fairest day.

Once the earth sang to us and we replied,
Such fellowship and lovely tenderness
Of understanding bound us side by side
To live and love, to buffet and caress
In fond humility or lustful pride ;
But now, amid the darkness and the stress
Of our own folly, we are driv'n apart
To view her beauty with an aching heart.

How shall we find again that holy place
Where calm-browed evening walked among the
trees
With folded hands and grave exultant pace,
Her golden tresses lifting on the breeze
Of summer twilight, and her starry face
Flushed with remembrance of enchanted seas ?
Alas ! the grove is trampled and the light
Of that fair vision fled beyond our sight.

And you, dark-wingéd lord of minstrelsy,
Lorn harbinger of night's eternal quest,
How shall we hark to your intensity
Of anguished love, to find our pain expressed,
Who strive and sweat in crazy misery
Of herded hate, which like a raging pest
Smites the blind smiter with his own intent,
On vengeance breeding vengeance without vent ?

O, who shall bring the days of life again ?
What bright angelic messenger will burst
These bonds of blinding folly and the pain
Of servitude, where men do but thirst

In joy to use their little span of brain,
Labour and toil like devils deep accurst
To pile the agony of the reeling world
Till life and death in chaos are uphurled.

O summer, summer, though your ruthless joy
Surround our famine with such banqueting,
Even the while we perish and destroy
Your arms enfold us in our suffering !
You clasp our maimed and bleeding limbs with joy
And we to earthy tenderness do cling
To find relief beneath your laughing sky,
Our last of warmth and comfort ere we die.

To a Dead Rebel

DOUBT not the harvest of your meanest thought
And tardy reaping of solicitude ;
Unquestioned be the worth for which you wrought
And earned the bitter wage of solitude.

Quiet and rage were mingled in your birth
And Freedom fiercely breathed upon your
youth ;
Now take the burden of a little earth,
Your heart is raised unto eternal truth.

Hope

NIGHT upon night whose deeper shadows hide
One lonely shepherd in a world that kills,
Death at his elbow, Sorrow at his side,
Immortal Hope still walks upon the hills.
His limbs are weary and his shoulders bow'd
And now his head is dark against the stars,—
Are they his crown or are they prison bars,
The woof of Night's impenetrable shroud ?

What power divine has borne him through the
years,—
His staff of wisdom ? It was broke in twain :
His scrip of faith ? 'Twas long erased with tears ;
Nay, but I know, for through the dark and pain,—
One breath of dawn, a little bird that sings,—
And lo ! his feet aflame with golden wings.

Song

Out of the Dark

DARK tho' the night be, Spear of my heart,
Flash through the darkness, tremble on high,—
Outward for ever speed to thy mark,
Swifter than storm-wind out of the dark
Fly, spear, fly !

Hark to the star-song, Rose of my heart,
Squander thy breath on the sightless night :—
The darkness binds thee but do not sigh,
Look to the verge of to-morrow's sky,
See the light !

Forward or backward, Flame of my heart,
Strain to the wind and let the rest go ;
Here in the stillness crouches the lark,
Sunward the wind blows out of the dark,
Blow, wind, blow !

Dew in the Grass

By a little tuft of grass
Folks may stay or folks may pass,
But they never seem to see
How it once appeared to me.

Had I walked in heaven or hell
It were easier to tell
What I saw and what I felt,
But I know my spirit knelt
And that I became as small
As a fly upon the wall,
And there flashed upon my sight
Such a forest of delight—
Full of tall, unearthly trees
Waving gently in the breeze,
And they sang a quiet song
While I listened long and long.

[Of the singing that I heard
Sweeter far than man or bird
All aglow with hidden meaning,
His is but the hollow screening.]

“ Cross the summer’s golden bloom
And the azure of the sky,

Flash the shuttles of the loom !
Right and left the swallows fly.

“ We have heard the starry ringing
From the darkness of the sod,
And we answer with our singing
As we weave the robe of God.

We are the yellow sunlight
And the blue of skies are we,
An echo of the starlight
And the whisper of the sea.”

And I heard this fairy song
Everywhere the trees among,—
Far above me as I strayed
Where the silent shadows played,
Waved their arms, or fled afraid
Down a long and arching glade,
Hung with branches all across
And the antlers of the moss,
Till my eyes could scarcely see
What might lie in front of me. . . .
Then I know not what befell
But I think I slipped and fell,
For I found that I was falling,—
All around me voices calling
Through a warm resistless dark
Full of wind-blown diamond-spark,—
Never moon had looked upon,
Where no sun had ever shone ;

And there came another singing
To my ears, a slumber-bringing,
Gently-soothing soft delight :
They were spirits of the night
And they bore a spell of dreams
From the meadows and the streams,
Singing :—

“ Fair and far between
Lie the green and silver sheen ;
When to light there comes an end
Catch the sickle in a bend
And unwind the golden skein
Day shall gather up again.
Sweetest bird-song, shout of mirth,
They have brought us to the birth,
They have bound us to the earth,
They shall braid our drooping lids
When the sun good-morrow bids.”

Past me fled the airy singing
Of the spirits homeward winging,
And I knew from very far
I was flying to a star,
Where it hung upon the night
Like a dome of crystal light,
While a pulsing radiance gleamed
All around it, and it seemed
Wrought by magical device
Out of moon-engender'd ice,
Girt around with moon-bow ray,
Overblown with diamond-spray ;

And I cried with sheer delight
As it rushed upon my sight,
And I looked within and gazed
Till my heart stood still amazed,
For within the circle shining
Was a fairy form reclining,
And I knew the silver gleaming
Of those limbs had lit my dreaming
Many days of many years
Full of laughter, full of tears.

“ At her feet the crimson rose,
In her heart a lily blows,
And the two shall never meet,
For the rose is at her feet
And the lily of her heart
Leans for ever here apart
Where the worlds are swept along
On the torrent of our song.”

So a voice from far away
Struck my spirit with dismay,
Swept my heart with driving spray,
While I saw around the sky,
Curving upward ceaselessly,
Foam-crests of Eternity.
And I knew with sharp despair
That I could not enter there. . . .
Then I wept and cried aloud
And I smote the crystal shroud.

Rainbow-flash and diamond-jar,
Upward rushed the flaming star,
Came a silver trumpet-blare,
Snow-white dove-wings beat the air. . . .

Fainter, fainter grew the sound,
I was kneeling on the ground—
Fell the sunshine on the lea
And before me I could see
Just a little grassy clod
Looking up and praising God.

But I walked on Eden ground,
And the tree of knowledge found,
And I knew my outcast state,
Saw the angel in the gate
And the flaming sword he bore
As a sign for ever more.

Prelude

(From a letter)

WHAT shall I tell you out of all these days
Of bright and dark, wherein our little ways
Meet and unbend like straws upon a stream ?
The heart's dull hunger and the fevered dream
Are sorry reading for a distant friend ;
Yet hearken, for while reason may contend
That life is here a stifled mockery,
Another voice cries louder, " 'Tis a lie ! "
And with that voice do I invoke my song
On eagle wings to bear my soul along.

There is a sense within our mortal sight,
A dawn within our dawning and a light
Of deeper radiance which our mortal clay
Enfolds against the darkness of our day.
There is a garden where the molten gold
Of summer sunlight makes the spirit bold
To leap upon the meadows and uprear
The poison'd root of bitter-sweet despair,
And throw the stars of worship up again
To flash and burn upon the human brain.

How shall the Morning hearken to the Night
Or heed the wailing of her lost delight,

Or when, in pity for all hearts that yearn,
Shall Dawn unbind her sandals and return ?
The Sun who rises in his lordly might
And bends his bow upon the western night,
Nor stays his chargers in their fiery speed
To loose his golden shafts o'er hill and mead,
Shall he turn back in his resistless course
Though all the stars plead Night's unhappy loss,
And dreams all disarrayed, a piteous rout,
Rush from the horn and ivory gates without
And crying fade upon the morning air
With waving arms and drift of golden hair ?

More wretched I, no sun with brave array
Laid burning hands upon my heart's dismay,
Nor felled the darkness like a lion's paw
Some cringing heifer, when the dawn with gore
Is stained and saturate till heaven o'erflows
With golden laughter at our little woes.
But sad and pitiless across the waste
Came Morning grey and solemn-eyed and chaste. . . .
I knew the anguish of a dread suspense
Which held my heart and baffled every sense
With that unmeasured torment of the soul
Wherein I saw my life's imagined goal
Fade like a dream upon the morning grey,
A star-bright splendour quenched in common
day.
Then would I fain have turned to Night's soft
arms
To dream again amid her starry calms

Or seek release beneath the magic tree,
Fair-branching evergreen of memory,
Wherein I knew bright birds for ever sing
And sweetest thoughts are of its blossoming.
But on my spirit fell the blight of morn,
By whose grey fingers, lo ! Night's mantle torn ;
And o'er the stars across the upper air
Far spread the pallid wings of daily care.

And I beheld my days—a wretched throng,
Sick with all straitened sense of right and wrong.
Whereat my heart cried out with bitter shame
Of loneliness, and strife without a name :—
“ Can you behold the dross of this your life
Nor pray the showman draw his belted knife
And cut the rope which hangs your mortal clay,
A dangling folly to the light of day ?
Wherefore this fumbling of an empty purse
And braggart arm-swing, when a tinker's curse
Were more than fair exchange for all your worth ?
Ah ! bid him cut the rope and delve the earth
Where you shall rest secure nor bear the shame
Of strife and sorrow, and another's blame
For what yourself have deemed the dearest prize
And stretched imploring hands to, while your
cries
Re-echoed in another's mockery !
Where is my dayspring and my liberty,
One little hope to comfort my desire ?
You answer not, but gaze upon the mire
Of your own wasting and my misery.”

Then mad to strike this cynic treachery
I stripped my heart of all the rags it bore
And truth on truth I stabbed it to the core. . . .

Up through the silent agony a sound—
Three jets of scarlet at a single bound
Severed the frozen heaven's grey serene,—
A burst of blossom and the earth flashed green.

Thus, O my song, through iron gates of pain
O'er the world's frozen tears you rose again !
Borne on the wings of your own fierce despair—
Song of my heart, you caught the upper air
And swung the seasons round to make a Spring,
In whose delirious beauty hovering,
While Death may stalk the world in vain for you,
One urgent wing-beat and you gain the blue.

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